OutcomeMapping
LEARNING COMMUNITY

Discussion Summary:
What makes Outcome Mapping distinct?

Discussion on the OM Community Map:

Reply 1:
Try approaching OM as a way of thinking about development and humanitarian results that is useful only in some situations.

Terry Smutylo, Canada

Reply 8:
See OM related material (video and manual).

Simon Hearn, UK

Reply 15:
OM focuses on participants in development and responsive re-programming in view of emerging (often unplanned) outcomes.

Ditch Townsend, UK

Reply 16:
Integration of OM thinking in LFA in order to adapt to complex environments and practical challenges.

Richard Hummelbrunner, Austria

Reply 13:
LFA are the perfect example of result-oriented approach while OM is an actor-oriented approach.

Roberto Borlini, US

Reply 2:
OM seems to help where things are less predictable and more complex.

Doug Reeler, South Africa

Question:
How OM is really different from or better than the LFA?

Chew Chee Keong Malaysia

The full discussion is available online:
http://outcomemapping.ca/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1235

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Hi, I am Chew and I am based at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Asia Pacific Zone Office in Kuala Lumpur. I am with the PMER unit at the zone office and my work is mostly focused on PMER capacity building, our priority target group being the technical programme managers in the IFRC secretariat and those in the RCRC national societies. I do a lot of PMER training and mentoring as part of the capacity building, and we use the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as our planning tool.

I have been trying to keep up with the latest developments and thinking in OM since I sat through an OM session during a M&E training workshop in Kuala Lumpur a few years ago. And I have hesitated for a very long time to ask questions of clarification or start sharing through this OM learning community.

As a PMER trainer and practitioner, I have always been interested in new PMER approaches, tools, and thinking and so on, and to learn from them and adapt them for use in the IFRC. I would read the latest PMER manuals, concept papers and so on. I have done the same with OM, and this manual which Sonia has produced.

Unfortunately, and quite likely because I may not have adequately understood OM, I have not really been able to take advantage of any of the new OM concepts and philosophy or learn from them and make use of them in my work in the IFRC. Regrettably, I have not been convinced of the OM approach.

I am very serious about learning new PMER approaches and tools, and if I find something that is better than the LFA, which, despite its limitations, is still the best planning tool there is at the moment, I think, I will be the first to adopt and change.

If anyone has the time, can you please tell me, hopefully in very simple language (without using of the OM terms), why OM should be the new flavour and how OM is really different from or better than the LFA? I would be really grateful to you for sparring your time to do this.

Thank you and kind regards to everyone.

Chew

Responses were received, with many thanks, from:

1. Terry Smutylo, Canada
2. Adot Killmeyer-Oleche, Austria
3. Doug Reeler, South Africa
4. Monica Mercieca, Australia
5. Simon Hearn, UK
6. Tony Prior, US
7. Roberto Borlini, US
8. Ditch Townsend, UK
9. Richard Hummelbrunner, Austria

Summary of Responses:

1. Terry Smutylo shares a simple definition of OM-in-a-nutshell made by one of the participants at a recent workshop in Canberra. As the textbox shows, OM is an approach to understanding and measuring changes in people's behaviour. Players are the focus of OM which recognises the importance of agency in interventions.

2. Doug Reeler took this idea further. According to him, OM is helpful in unpredictable and more complex contexts where you can only be guided by observing immediate changed in behaviour and relationships – where formalised frameworks are 'more of a bother than a help'. In addition, he shared his experience working with rural women caregivers co-producing services for young children. The key of this process is involvement of everyone, especially women who are not used to M&E language and framework. The challenge is to protect practice on the ground but to attract donors that demand usual formalised frameworks.

3. Chew Chee Keong wanted further clarification on the difference of successful case studies using OM and cases where LFA have not worked.

> - OM is an approach to understanding and measuring changes that occur in people's behaviour that are, at least in part, likely to be response to a planned intervention.
> - OM recognises that changes to people's behaviour will usually be the result of a number of "things" in people's lives (including their own agency) so that any intervention can only contribute to change – it can be never be the sole 'cause' of change.
> - The focus of OM is on players who are in the sphere influence of the intervention/program/project (including the players who implement the program and the player who are the 'target' of the program.
> - Behaviours that the program would expect/like/love to see from groups of players are described (and re-described across time as the context/situation changes) and monitored.
> - The 'success' of the program will be determined by agreeing on which behaviours by players 'should' be exhibited at various points in time.

4. Simon Hearn linked back to the OM manual and a video presenting an overview of OM by Sarah Earl, one of the authors of the manual.

5. Tony Prior shared a few ideas about how USAID is changing programming procedures and policies in order to make their strategies more adaptive and focused on learning. For instance, they are linking results frameworks at the strategic level and LFA for project planning. Although some USAID missions tried OM, there is still uncertainty on how to adapt it to their regular approaches. For more details about this process see the resource uploaded by Tony: ADS Chapter 200 - Introduction to Programming Policy.

6. Roberto Borlini contributed to the discussion a post about the difference between LFA and Outcome Mapping from the practitioner's approach. He finds that logical frameworks are the perfect example of results-oriented approach whereas Outcome Mapping is an actor-oriented approach. He linked back to the OM Resource Library as a starting point to understand different approaches. He also presented a table as a starting point to mixed approaches according to the size of implementing organisation and type of project.

		Type of project	
		Soft	**Hard**
Size of implementing organization	**Big**	Results, although mostly intangible, produce observable impact due to relative size of the organization compared to the sector. Actor-oriented approaches can be <u>helpful</u> for project design and M&E.	Results are concrete and straightforward to measure. Impact is a consequence of sheer size more than of planned strategy. Impact on different stakeholders is likely to be overlooked. Integrating an actor-oriented approach is <u>advisable</u> to analyze full extent of project impact (potential negative impact).
	Small	Sector-wide impact is hard to measure/achieve. Results are mostly intangible. Actor-oriented approach is <u>key</u> to project design, management and M&E.	Although results can be easily measured, sector-wide impact eludes implementers. The focus is on activities/outputs. Integrating an actor-oriented approach to project design is <u>necessary</u> to scale up impact.

7. Roberto responded to Chew's question on case studies using OM or LFA. He shared the experience of a [food security project using logframe](#) and a solid-waste management project in Latin America. In both cases, outputs had been produced but few people were using them. For him, a combination of results and actor-based approaches would have contributed to a more balanced intervention.

8. [Ditch Townsend](#) raised the issue that using OM relates to the 're-humanisation in terms of power and relationships', a less material concept of development in contrast to LFA. In his experience, the main difference between the log frame and OM is that OM focusses on both the participants in development and on responsive re-programming in view of emerging (often unplanned) outcomes – neither of which are easy to achieve with the log frame.

9. [Richard Hummelbrunner](#) added two weaknesses of the log frame from his experience; 1) in practice, log frames are not results-based; 2) assume a "linear" progression of effects which takes place quasi-automatic (i.e. irrespective of the actors involved) or contextual conditions. He summarised the critique about LFA in "[Beyond Logframes: Using Systems Concepts in Evaluation](#)" by the [Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development](#). He also proposed variations to LFA, including the OM. He offered the integration of OM thinking in logframes given the widespread use of them by many agencies and donors. More details on his proposed methodology can be found here: "[Adapting the design and use of logframes: to the type of intervention. A case example from UNIDO](#)".

Concluding remarks and actions to take forward:

- There is still some uncertainty on the use and language of OM as an M&E methodology.
- However, some community members have proposed the integration of Outcome Mapping and Logical Framework Approach in order to respond to donors requirements while also able to monitor behaviour change, complex environments and practical challenges.
- Some case studies and examples on the use of LFA have been presented. Nevertheless, there is a lack of published case studies using OM as an alternative to standard approaches.
- The question of how integrated approaches of LFA and OM can be implemented is yet to be discussed.